



TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE  
FOR THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

MARCH 3, 2011

Supporting

H.B. 6380: AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM  
ENDING JUNE 30, 2013 (Judicial Branch)

Senator Harp, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee: This testimony is submitted by Abby Anderson, Executive Director of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (Alliance). The Alliance is a statewide, non-profit organization that works to reduce the number of children and youth entering the juvenile and criminal justice system and advocates a safe, effective and fair system for those involved.

**The Alliance is here tonight to advocate for funds that will allow the Judicial Branch to implement Raise the Age for 17-year-olds on time as of July 1, 2012. The budget currently in front of the Committee does not include ANY funding for the expansion of the juvenile justice system that will occur when the 17-year-olds enter in 2012. In order for the system to absorb this new cadre of youth and continue the positive outcomes and trends it has experienced over the past five years, the budget of the Branch must be appropriately expanded.**

DCF, and the juvenile justice system as a whole, has greatly improved its outcomes for youth. Court referrals, detention admissions and delinquency and FWSN commitments have all been dramatically reduced over the past five years. The network of programs and services put in place to achieve those outcomes must be preserved for the youth already in the system. In 2010, when the 16 year olds entered the system, the efficiencies achieved by the Branch meant "room" for the 16-year-olds to be added with less stress and funding that was originally expected. Those efficiencies and positive outcomes continue even as the 16-year-olds have been in the system for more than a year. This, in turn, means more room for the 17-year-olds to be added than was expected.

While a tremendous development, it does not mean that no new funds are needed. Without funds to expand the existing services, gains in public safety and youth outcomes will be lost as many system-involved youth will be unable to access necessary services. As the Branch handles the "front end" of the system, it is perfectly positioned to intervene early and prevent escalation of behaviors that would lead to more involved and expensive commitments. The Branch has proven adept at this diversion and early intervention as the number of youth committed as delinquents or FWSNs have both dramatically fallen.

As the specific line items of the budget are more fully fleshed out, the Alliance respectfully requests that the Committee ensure that the Judicial Branch budget reflects a commitment to ensure on-time implementation of Raise the Age for 17-year-olds in a manner that ensures they, and the existing cadre of youth in the juvenile justice system, experience outcomes positive for public safety and for them.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information.